

Wisconsin Sharptail Grouse Status 2004

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Abstract

The total number of dancing males on the 9 managed tracts in Wisconsin decreased from 188 in 2003 to 160 this year, indicating a small decline in the sharptail population since last year. The overall population has been on a gradual decline that started in 1998 (Figure 2). Survey efforts by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society in unmanaged habitats resulted in locating less sharptails in 2004, with a total of 243 birds found this spring compared to 336 last year.

Methods

Sharptail populations on managed properties were monitored by counting displaying males on dancing grounds. Male birds were identified by observations from blinds placed on dancing grounds with the aid of field glasses after approaching the dancing ground afoot or by vehicle. Complete census of display grounds was attempted on those properties designated as sharptail management tracts (Figure 1).

Sharptail surveys on private lands generally involved selecting one or more blocks of the best available habitat and then conducting listening routes along roads transecting those blocks. Those dancing grounds found within wildland habitat blocks were approached and all birds flushed from each site were counted, no attempt being made to distinguish sexes. The survey is a cooperative effort between DNR, USFS, GLIFWC, members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and volunteers. Sharptail surveys on unmanaged lands were concentrated within a portion of northwestern Wisconsin, primarily in deer management units 2 and 9 (Figure 1).

Results

The 2004 dancing ground survey indicated a slight decrease in sharptail numbers on most managed sites, contributing to an overall decrease of 10% in comparison to 2003 counts (Table 1). Dancing male counts increased on three of the nine managed lands including Douglas County Wildlife Area, Pershing W.A., and on Dike Seventeen. Four of the managed areas declined. Two surveys, the Wood County W.A. and the Kimberly Clark W.A., were not completed this year.

Replicates of these traditionally surveyed areas are the most dependable index to changes in the sharptail grouse populations.

Survey efforts by members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society resulted in a count of 243 birds in deer management units 2 and 9. This count was 30% lower than that obtained during a similar survey operation conducted in 2003.

Table 1. Sharptail Population Trends on Managed Lands.

Number of Dancing Males on Sharptail Grouse Mangement Areas from 1991-2004														
Property	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Crex Meadows W.A.	126	47	53	59	83	110	117	132	111	110*	73*	61	61	53
Douglas County W.A.	5	4	2	8	12	9	9	18	20	16	11	12	20	21
Kimberly Clark W.A.	56	32	20	20	28	20	15	25	40	39	5	9	4	n/a
Moquah Barrens W.M.A.	6	9	6	7	21	14	17	34	40	36	19	35	29	14
Namekagon Barrens W.A.	37	25	16	25	44	48	55	74	54	44	15	27	52	37
Pershing W.A.	37	34	24	16	26	30	43	34	22	**	19	13	3	16
Riley Lake W.M.A.	25	8	5	7	18	17	19	19	27	27	17	12	17	16
Wood County W.A.	54	13	11	16	19	18	10	17	18	6	0	8	n/a	n/a
Dike Seventeen	16	10	9	9	8	7	3	18	3	6	0	2	2	3
Total	362	182	146	167	259	273	288	371	325	284	159	179	188	160

*Not a complete count of dancing males.

**A few dancing males were present.

Figure 1. Sharptail survey area, 2004.

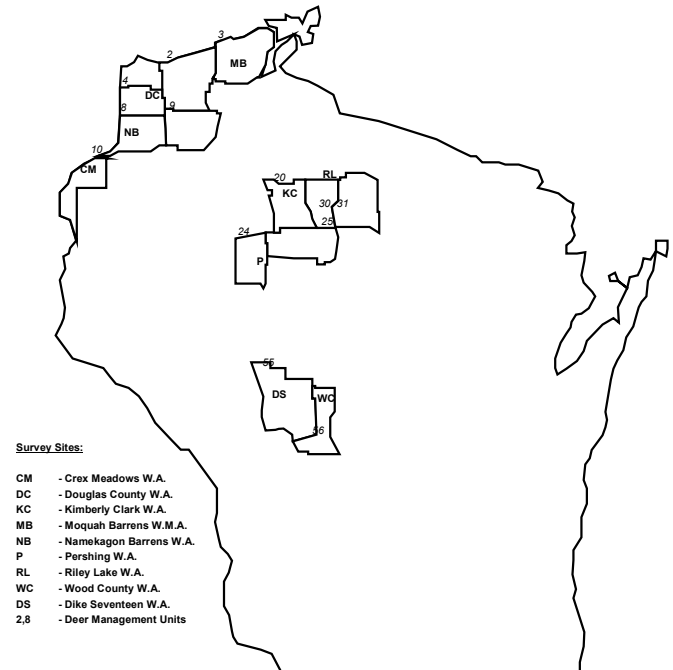


Figure 2. Number of Dancing Males on Sharptail Grouse Mangement Areas from 1991-2004

